

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ISLAMA 04837 01 OF 02 111425Z

53

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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R 111135Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5438

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMCONSUL LAHORE

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 4837

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PK, AF

SUBJECT: PAK-AFGHAN RELATIONS

REF: KABUL 3542, KABUL 3553, ISLAMABAD 4652,

SUMMARY: MFA DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR AFGHANISTAN AND AFGHAN CHARGE' HAVE GIVEN US THEIR ACCOUNT AND ASSESSMENT OF DAOUD INVITATION TO BHUTTO AND PAK PN'S ACCEPTANCE. BOTH SEEM TO FORESEE A SUMMIT MEETING WITHOUT PRELIMINARY LOWER LEVEL TALKS, THE SESSION ITSELF PROBABLY BEING A FAIRLY FREEWHEELING AFFAIR. IN ACCEPTING THE INVITATION, THE PAK QUITE DELIBERATELY CHOSE TO IGNORE THE (TO THEM) UNFAVORABLE CONNOTATION OF THE PHRASE "THE POLITICAL DIFFERENCE" BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, AND ARE PUBLICLY STESSING THAT THE TALKS WILL BE HELD WITHOUT PRE-CONDITIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. POLITICAL COUNSELOR MAY 10 HAD BACK-TO-BACK DISCUSSIONS ON PAK-AFGHAN RELATIONS WITH MFA DIRECTOR
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PAGE 02 ISLAMA 04837 01 OF 02 111425Z

GENERAL (AFGHANISTAN) MANSUR AHMED AND AFGHAN CHARGE'

RAHIM SHERZOI. WITH TOP LEVEL MFA OFFICIALS EITHER AT THE ISTANBUL ISLAMIC FOREIGN MINISTERS' CONFERENCE (MINISTER AZIZ AHMED, ADDITIONAL FOREIGN SECRETARIES NAIK AND SHAHNAWAZ) OR PREOCCUPIED WITH PREPARATION FOR THE INDO-PAK TALKS BEGINNING TOMORROW (FOREIGN SECRETARY AGHA SHAHI), MANSUR AHMED WAS THE MOST SENIOR MFA OFFICER AVAILABLE WHO COULD PRESENT GOP POSITION ON PROSPECTIVE DAOUD-BHUTTO SUMMIT. IT WAS SHERZOI WHO HANDED OVER TO BHUTTO ON MAY 6 DAOUD'S MAY 2 INVITATION, HAVING RETURNED FROM KABUL FOR THAT PURPOSE.

2. MANSUR AHMED VOLUNTEERED BRIEF BACKGROUND TO DAOUD INVITATION. ACCORDING MANSUR, BHUTTO, ON RETURNING FROM IZMIR RCD SUMMIT, HAD READ REPORTS WHICH GAVE CUMULATIVE DATA ON EXTENSIVE FLOOD AND EARTHQUAKE DAMAGE IN AFGHANISTAN. HE DECIDED ON LARGE RELIEF DONATION AS HUMANITARIAN GESTURE. MANSUR STATED THAT AFGHANS WERE AT FIRST HESITANT, BUT EVENTUALLY DECIDED TO ACCEPT OFFER. BHUTTO THEREUPON DIRECTED THAT PAK PROPAGANDA DIRECTED AGAINST AFGHANISTAN SHOULD IMMEDIATELY CEASE SINCE IT WOULD BE "INCONSISTENT" FOR PAKS TO PROVIDE RELIEF TO GOA WHILE ATTACKING IT THROUGH MEDIA. THIS UNILATERAL ACTION BY GOP WAS FOLLOWED QUICKLY BY RECIPROCAL MOVE BY AFGHANS. ACCORDING TO MANSUR, THEY CEASED USING INVECTIVE AGAINST PAKISTAN AND ITS LEADERS, STOPPED THEIR CUSTOMARY DIATRIBES AGAINST PUNJABIS, AND LOWERED THE LEVEL OF THEIR OUTPUT TO WHAT HE SAID "THE AFGHANS CALL POLITICAL PROPAGANDA," I.E., MODERATELY PHRASED SUPPORT OF THE RIGHTS OF THE PATHANS AND BALUCH.

3. MANSUR RECOUNTED THAT THE BHUTTO-SHERZOI MEETING HAD BEEN A CORDIAL ONE (THIS IS ALSO SHERZOI'S REPORT) AND THAT THE PM HAD ACCEPTED THE INVITATION IN PRINCIPLE. WHEN THE AFGHANS PRESSED FOR THE IMMEDIATE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE INVITATION AND ITS ACCEPTANCE, THE PAKS AGREED AND ISSUED THEIR TWO-LINE STATEMENT THE EVENING OF MAY 7. A FORMAL REPLY WILL PRESUMABLY BE SENT LATER.

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PAGE 03 ISLAMA 04837 01 OF 02 111425Z

4. MANSUR SAID THAT IN ANALYZING THE WORDING OF THE RADIO KABUL ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE DAOUD INVITATION (AND PRESUMABLY THAT OF THE AFGHAN PRESIDENT'S LETTER ITSELF), THE PAKS HAD FOCUSSED ON THE USE OF THE PHRASE "THE POLITICAL DIFFERENCE" BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. ALTHOUGH THEY HAD RECOGNIZED THAT THIS IS A FAMILIAR CODEWORD FOR THE PAKHTUNISTAN ISSUE, THEY

HAD DECIDED THAT IT DID NOT CONSTITUTE A "PRECONDITION" FOR TALKS. THEY NOTED THAT THE LETTER MADE NO MENTION OF THE RELEASE OF THE NAP LEADERS, THE SUSPENSION OF THE WALI KHAN TRIAL, THE FREEING OF GHAFAR KHAN, "CONDITIONS" MENTIONED BY THE AFGHANS IN THE PAST. MANSUR SAID THAT HE AND ADDITIONAL FOREIGN SECRETARY SHAHNAWAZ HAD HELD A PRESS BRIEFING ON THE NIGHT OF MAY 8 AND HAD EXPLAINED TO NEWSMEN THE GOP POSITION THAT THE DAOUD INVITATION HAD BEEN WITHOUT PRE-CONDITIONS. (AS A RESULT, BOTH NEWS TORIES AND EDITORIALS WHICH APPEARED ON MAY 9 AND THEREAFTER HAVE STRESSED THE "NO PRECONDITION" THEME, GIVING A SOMEWHAT DEFENSIVE FLAVOR TO WHAT HAVE OTHERWISE BEEN HOPEFUL AND FAVORABLE REACTIONS TO DAOUD'S GESTURE AND BHUTTO'S RESPONSE. THE AUTHORITATIVE APP ACCOUNT OF THE BRIEFING, WHICH MANSUR SAID WAS ACCURATE, STATES IN THIS CONTEXT THAT "ALTHOUGH AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT IN KABUL YESTERDAY REFERRED TO THE EXISTENCE OF 'THE POLITICAL DIFFERENCE' BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, PAKISTAN HAS ALWAYS MAINTAINED THE POSITION THAT THIS COUNTRY HAD NO DIFFERENCES AS SUCH WITH AFGHANISTAN. HOWEVER, OBSERVERS HERE BELIEVE THE TALKS BETWEEN PRESIDENT DAUD (SIC) AND PREMIER BHUTTO WOULD HELP FIND OUT THE DIFFERNCES." (N.B. - IN PLURAL)

5. MANSUR SAID THAT NO DATES HAD BEEN SET FOR THE PM'S VISIT TO KABUL NOR ANY MODALITIES FOR THE TALKS DECIDED UPON. HE DISMISSED AS SPECUALTION A JUNE VISIT, BUT DID NOTE THAT GIVEN THE UPCOMING BHUTTO TRIP TO NORTH KOREA AND THE PRC THE EARLIEST THE PM COULD GET TO AFGHANISTAN WOULD BE THAT MONTH. HIS DISCUSSION OF THE VISIT WAS ENTIRELY IN TERMS OF A SUMMIT WITHOUT PRELIMINARY TALKS AT THE AGHA SHAHI-CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 ISLAMA 04837 01 OF 02 111425Z

WHID ABDULLAH AND AZIZ-AHMED-NAIM LEVEL AS HAD BEEN WORKED OUT IN THE EARLY 1975 SCENARIO. HE SUGGESTED THAT IT WAS THE AFGHANS WHO HAD WANTED SUCH A SERIES OF MEETINGS AND INDICATED THAT THE PAKS WOULD BE HAPPIER IF THEY DID NOT HAVE TO SIT DOWN IN ADVANCE WITH WAHID ABDULLAH, WHO THEY BOTH DISLIKE AS A PERSON AND MISTRUST AS A HARDLINER.

6. MANSUR SAID THAT THE THOUGHT THAT THE SUMMIT WOULD BE A FREEWHEELING AFFAIR WITHOUT AGENDA. HE AGREED THAT BHUTTO SEEMED TO FAVOR SUCH SESSIONS, AND SAID THAT THE PAKS WOULD GO TO KABUL TO HEAR THE AFGHANS OUT. HE WAS NOT INCLINED TO SPECULATE ON THE OUTCOME, BUT CLEARLY FELT THAT IT WOULD BE MOST SURPRISING IF A DISPUTE OF 28 YEARS STANDING COULD BE SETTLED

THROUGH ONE SUCH ENCOUNTER. HE LOOKED FORWARD WITH NO ENTHUSIASM WHATEVER TO THE DRAFTING OF THE COMMUNIQUE WHICH HE PRESUMED WOULD FOLLOW THE TALKS. THESE, HE RECALLED, HAD PROVEN PITFALLS IN THE PAST HISTORY OF HIGH LEVEL PAK-AFGHAN TALKS.

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PAGE 01 ISLAMA 04837 02 OF 02 111424Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 4837

7. ASKED WHY HE THOUGHT THE AFGHANS HAD MADE THEIR MOVE WHEN THEY DID, MANSUR SAID THAT HIS OWN PERSONAL, OFF-THE-RECORD ASSESSMENT (AN UNUSUAL PHRASE FOR MANSUR, WHO PREFERS THE SPOKESMAN APPROACH) WAS THAT THEIR HAND HAD BEEN FORCED BY BHUTTO'S RELIEF-PROPAGANDA INITIATIVE. HE SUGGESTED THAT OTHERS AT MFA TOOK THE MORE CHARITABLE VIEW THAT THE AFGHANS HAD BEEN LOOKING FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO OPEN A DIALOGUE WITH THE PAKS AND HAD FOUND AN APPROPRIATE OCCASION IN BHUTTO'S MOVES. HE RESISTED THE IDEA THAT THE MOVE MIGHT HAVE BEEN MADE IN THE CONTEXT OF OTHER EVENTS (I.E., INDO-PAK NORMALIZATION, THE ISLAMIC FOREIGN MINISTERS' CONFERENCE).

8. SHERZOI, WHO GENERALLY TAKES AN EXCEEDINGLY GLOOMY VIEW OF PROSPECTS FOR IMPROVED PAK-AFGHAN RELATIONS, WAS IN AN UNWONTEDLY CHEERFUL FRAME OF MIND. HE PUT THE DAOUD LETTER IN THE CONTEXT OF CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN AFGHANISTAN (DAOUD COULD ONLY MAKE SUCH A MOVE WHILE HE REMAINED UNFETTERED BY A CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 ISLAMA 04837 02 OF 02 111424Z

CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK) AND PROGRESS TOWARD NORMALIZATION ELSEWHERE, I.E. IN INDO-PAK AND SENO-INDIAN RELATIONS. MOST UNUSUALLY FOR HIM, HE GAVE BHUTTO CREDIT FOR TAKING THE INITIATIVE IN LOWERING THE LEVEL OF PROPAGANDA AND PROVIDING RELIEF SUPPLIES TO AFGHANISTAN.

9. SHOWING THE POL COUNSELOR A COPY OF THE DAOUD LETTER TO BHUTTO (SEE KABUL 3553), SHERZOI FOCUSED ON THE REITERATED PHRASE "POLITICAL DIFFERENCE," NOTING THAT IT WAS IN THE SINGULAR. THIS "POLITICAL DIFFERENCE" HAD TO BE DISCUSSED; ONCE IT WAS SETTLED ALL THE OTHER MINOR PROBLEMS WHICH CROP UP FROM TIME TO TIME AND WHICH STEM FROM IT COULD BE EASILY DEAL WITH. HE, TOO, SEEMED TO FORESEE A GENERAL DISCUSSION WITHOUT AGENDA IN WHICH THE TWO SIDES COULD FREELY AIR THEIR POINTS OF VIEW. HE SAID HE REGRETTED THE STRESS ON "NO PRECONDITIONS" IN THE MFA BRIEFING, BUT SEEMED PREPARED TO OVERLOOK BOTH THAT AND THE CLAIM MADE BY MFA THAT TI WAS BHUTTO RATHER

THAN DAOUD WHO HAD INITIATED THE IDEA OF A SUMMIT MEETING. ASKED WHY THE IDEA OF A STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH HAD BEEN ABANDONED (LIKE MANSUR AHMED, HE SPOKE AS IF ONLY A SUMMIT WAS IN STORE), SHERZOI REPLIED THAT THE PURPOSE OF THE LOWER LEVEL TALKS IN THE EARLIER SCENARIO HAD BEEN TO PRODUCE AN IMPROVED ATMOSPHERE. SINCE THAT HAD ALREADY COME ABOUT, LOWER LEVEL TALKS WERE UNNECESSARY.

10. COMMENTS FOLLOW.
AMSTUTZ

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